Current Baseline Chemistry Data

The table shows the chemistry data on polycylic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) chemical contaminants. The chemistry data are reported in nanograms per gram (parts per billion: ppb) PAH in edible tissue of finfish and shellfish collected from April 28 through May 19, 2010, at sites in the Gulf of Mexico where oil was not observed. Baseline is defined as levels of PAHs in seafood before the animals were exposed to Deepwater Horizon oil.

Chemicals analyzed: Consistent with the protocol the table shows the eight polycylic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) that are on the list of re-opening criteria and for which we have screening values. The last five PAHs (fluoranthene, pyrene, benz[a]anthracene, chrysene, and benzo[a]pyrene) are considered to be the compounds of most concern. The eight PAHs are naphthalene (NPH), fluorine (FLU), anthracene/phenanthrene (ANT/ PHN), fluoranthene (FLA), pyrene (PYR), benz[a]anthracene (BAA), chrysene (CHR), and benzo[a]pyrene (BaP).

Number of samples: Samples of individual animals taken in the field are either analyzed individually or combined with samples of the same species at the same site to make a composite sample for chemical analysis. Composite samples are made up of two to 12 individual animals.

Sample sites: The sample sites are identified by general area, and are indicated on the map of Baseline sites. Baseline samples that have been analyzed are offshore from Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. There are additional baseline samples that will be analyzed from sites offshore from western Louisiana and Florida.

Significance of findings: As expected, the concentrations of PAHs found in all baseline samples are very low. The concentrations shown in the table of baseline samples are at least ten fold lower than then the lowest permissible level for the eight PAHs listed above. The data on PAHs in the baseline samples are what we would expect, because the samples are from a number of finfish and shellfish species that were collected in a geographic area offshore that had not been impacted by oil and are not near any other known major source of PAHs.